

*A Letter from Mr. Nich. Waite Merchant of London, to Dr. Rob. Plot ; concerning some Incombustible Cloth, lately exposed to the Fire before the Royal Society.*

*Sir,*

THE great respect and honour I bear to the learned and ingenious Gentlemen of the *Royal Society*, prevailed with me, within few days after my arrival in this *City*, to expose to their sight & examination a piece of of *LinnenCloth*, which by their experiment consumed not in the *fire* : and you being then desirous I would give a short *narrative* of what *Substance*, and in what *parts* it is said to be made ; I here send you the same account I received of it, from one *Conco*, a natural *Chinesse*, resident in the *City* of *Batavia* in the North-East parts of *India*. Who, by means of *Keay-arear Sukradana* (likewise a *Chinesse*, and formerly chief *Customer* to the old *Sultan* of *Bantam*) did after several years diligence, procure, from a great *Mandarin* in *Lanquin* (a province of *China*,) near  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a yard of the said *cloth* ; and declared that he was credibly informed, that the Princes of *Tartary*, and others adjoining to them, did use it in *burning* their *dead* ; and that it was said and believed by them, to be made of the under part of the *root* of a *tree* growing in the Province of *Sutan* ; and was supposed, in like manner, to be made of the *Todda* trees in *India* : and that, of the upper part of the said *root*, near the surface of the ground, was made a finer sort, which in three or four times burning I have seen diminish almost half : They report also, that out of the said *tree* there distills a *liquor*, which not consuming, is used with a *Wiek* made of the

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same material with the *cloth*, to burn in their *Temples* to posterity. This, Sr, is the true *relation* I received of the nature and substance of it from the *Chinese* above mention'd; if as a *vegetable* it agree not with your Experiments or Judgment, your own commands obliging me to render you this *account*, I hope there will not any ill construction be made there of, which is all the Favour is desired by

London,

*Your most assured Humble*

Sept. 10th 1684.

Servant NICH. WAITE.

The *Handkerchief* or pattern of this *Incombustible Linen*, which was shewn the *Royal Society*, (part whereof is engraven *Fig. 3.*) being measured, was found in length 9 Inches, between the *fringe* or *tassels*; the *fringe* at each end being 3 Inches more; so that the whole was just a foot in length; and the breadth was just  $\frac{1}{2}$  a foot.

There were two *proofs* of its resisting *fire*; given at *London*: one, before some of the Members of the *R. Society*, privately, *Aug. 20. 1684*; when *Oyl* was permitted to be poured upon it whilst red hot, to enforce the violence of the fire: before it was put into the *fire* this first *trial*; it weighed one ounce, six drams, sixteen grains, and lost in the burning two drams, five grains.

The second *Experiment* of it was publick before the *Society*, *Nov. 12* following, when it weighed (as appears by the *Journal* of the *Society*) before it was put into the *fire*, one ounce, three drams, 18 grains. Being put into a clear *Charcoal fire*, it was permitted to continue red hot in it, for several minutes: when taken out (though red hot) it did not consume a piece of white *paper*, on which it was layd: it was presently cool, and upon weighing

ing it again, was found to have lost one dram, 6 grains.

Dec. 3, Mr. *Arthur Bayly*, one of the *Fellows* of the *R. Society*, presented them with a piece of this *Linnen* in the name of Mr. *Waite*. At the same time, the same Mr. *Bayly* presented Dr. *Plot* with another piece of it, which being brought to *Oxford* the *Experiment* was again repeated on it (Dec. 16.) it being put into a strong *Charcoal fire* in the *Natural History School*, in a full meeting of the *Philosophical Society* of that *University*; where after it had continued red hot for some considerable time, it was taken forth again little altered when cold, saving that it seemed a little *whiter* and *cleaner* than before it was put in; as appears upon the *Journal* of that *Society*. Concerning which, Dr. *Plot*, being desired to offer his thoughts, drew up the following *Discours*, which was read before the said *Society*, *June* the 23<sup>d</sup> *An.* 1685.

*A Discourse concerning the Incombustible Cloth above mentioned; Address'd in a Letter to Mr. Arthur Bayly Merchant, and Fellow of the R. Society; and to Mr. Nicholas Waite, Merchant of London; by Rob. Plot. LL. D.*

*Worthy Gentlemen.*

THE Historical account of the *incombustible Linnen Cloth* above mention'd, being sent me by the one of You; and a noble present made me of *part* of it by the other; with a desire from *both*, that I would search the old *Authors* and see how agreeable their *relations* are to *this*; give you *Both* a just right to the following Discourse: which I desire you would believe I address to you, not so much out of *Complement*, as true *gratitude* for so valuable

Fig. 1.

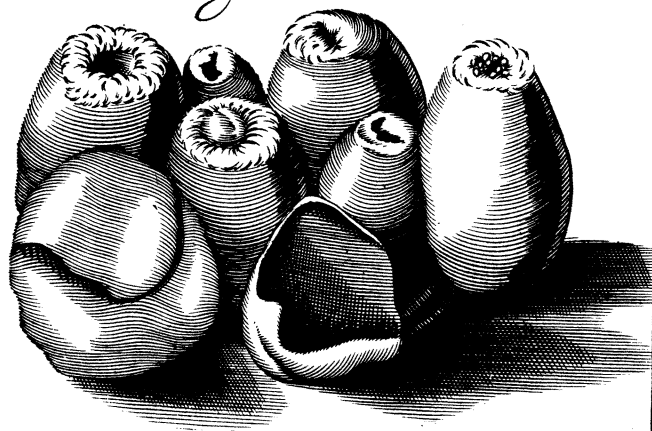


Fig. 2.

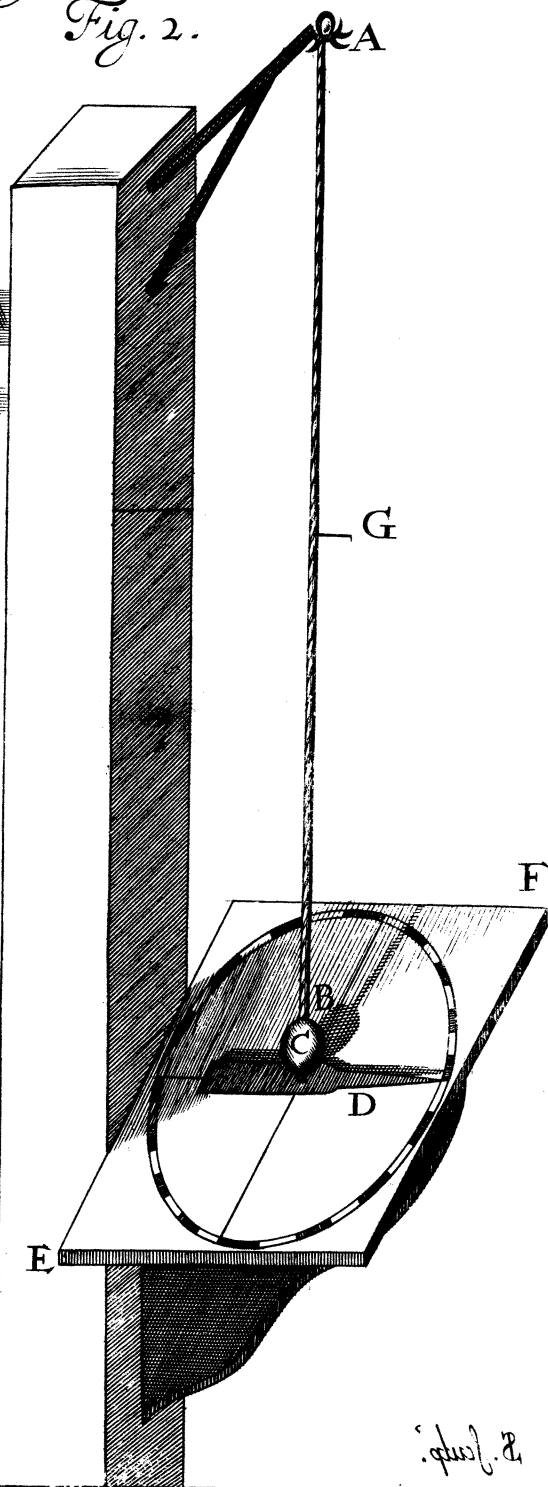


Fig. 3.

